

# 2011 Survey Summary I-80 Lakes West of Gothenburg

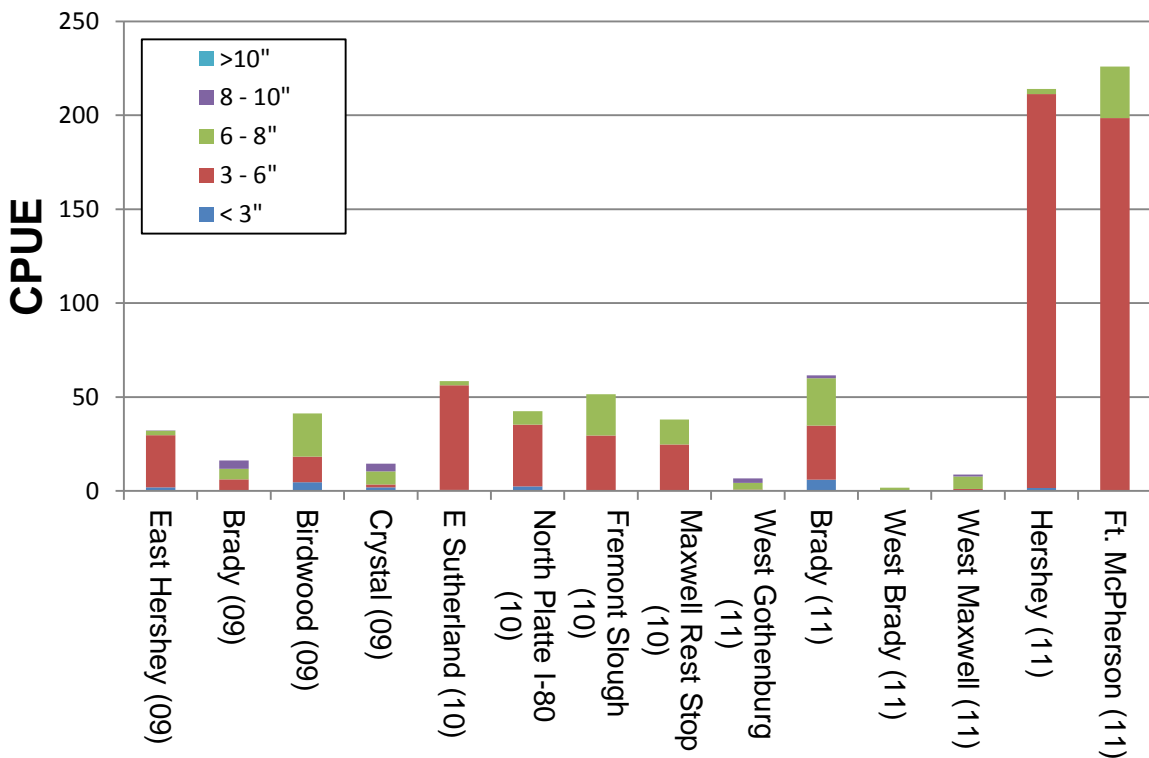
Jared Lorensen, Fisheries Biologist



**Bluegill** are prevalent in all I-80 Lakes because they are a favorite for anglers and serve as the primary prey item for larger predatory species. Bluegill are multiple spawners and are most easily caught during spawning periods. Bluegill tend to school during the winter and favor deeper water or submerged cover. Statewide regulations apply to most interstate lakes but West Brady and East Hershey have been designated as catch and release only lakes to encourage “trophy” fisheries. This regulation will be evaluated to determine its effectiveness.



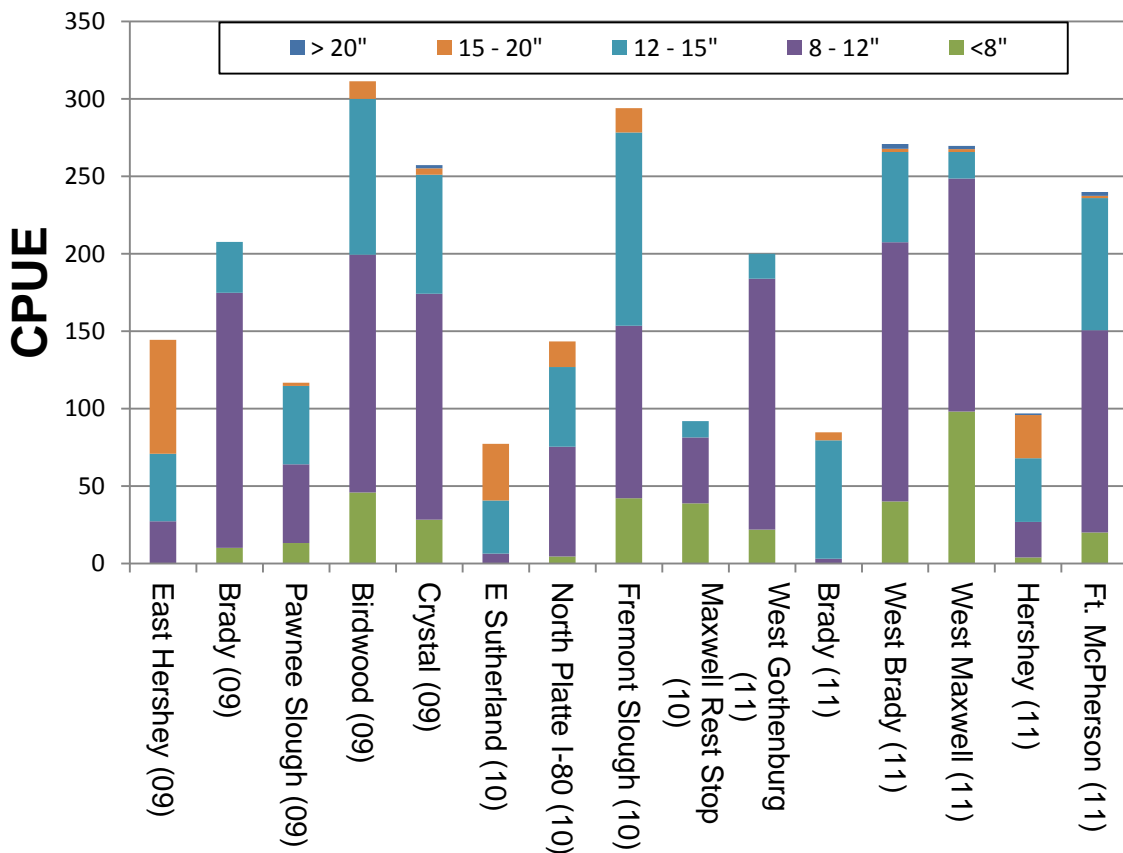
**Bluegill per Net by Length Class**



**Largemouth bass** are the main predatory species in most I-80 Lakes. They are favored by anglers because of their aggressive nature and hard fighting attitudes. Anglers have success using a myriad of live and artificial baits that mimic baitfish or crayfish. Largemouth can also be tempted to bite on artificials that appeal to their aggressive nature or invade their territory. Statewide regulations for largemouth bass apply to most I-80 Lakes but West Brady and East Hershey remain catch and release only.



**Largemouth per Hour by Length Class**





**Channel catfish** offer another angling opportunity in many I-80 Lakes. They are raised to 10" before being stocked to limit predation by largemouth bass and are stocked every other year to maintain fishable populations. The statewide daily bag limit is 5 channel catfish.

**Redear sunfish** are found in several of the I-80's such as East Hershey, Crystal, West Brady, Fort McPherson and West Gothenberg. Redear favor clear water and underwater vegetation. "Master Angler" proportions are produced in some of these lakes but redear tend to be less aggressive than bluegill which can make them harder to catch. (Pictured top – left)

**Rock bass** is a unique and rare species throughout most of the state but some I-80 Lakes have fishable populations and produce Master Angler sizes. Rock bass are located in Hershey, East Sutherland, and East Hershey. (Pictured top – right)

**Rainbow trout** are stocked into Birdwood I-80 Lake each year to provide a unique winter fishery. Trout are stocked twice each year for a total of 8,000 annually in Birdwood. There is no length limit and the daily bag limit is five with a possession limit of ten with only one fish 16" or longer in the daily bag.

**For more fishing regulation and public waters information consult the 2011-2012 fishing guide at**

<http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/Fishing/guides/fishguide/pdf/FishGuide.pdf>





## Vegetation Control and Angler Access

In 2005, Game and Parks employees began applying herbicide to some shorelines in order to improve access and control invasive plants such as *phragmites* spp. Treatment can take several years due to plant height and stand density. Successful results have been observed and these herbicide treatments will continue as necessary. Cedar and Russian olive tree clearing is another project that has occurred at Brady, Fremont Slough, West Gothenburg and North Platte I-80 Lakes to open up shorelines to bank access.

Most I-80 Lakes have primitive boat ramps. Ramps have been improved lately at Brady, Birdwood and West Gothenburg I-80 Lakes. It is important to note that boating regulations vary from lake to lake. Check the Boating Guide for details <http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/boating/pdfs/boatguide.pdf>

**No trash pickup at these areas so PLEASE do not litter**





## Boy Scout Projects

In 2011, four local Boy Scouts from Troop 289 conducted their Eagle Scout Projects on I-80 Lake Areas. At Birdwood, bucket structures were placed in the lake to congregate game species for anglers. Brush and branches were also cleared from the shoreline to improve bank angler access. At Fremont Slough, trees were cleared along the shoreline to improve bank angler access and a screen to protect the outlet structure was placed. At East Hershey, bucket structures and cedar trees were sunk, shoreline cleared and a location describing sign was placed.



## Brushing Projects

Several of the I-80 Lakes in the Southwest District have been enhanced with brush piles to improve habitat and concentrate fish for anglers. Trees are usually cut from surrounding wildlife management areas and positioned on the ice. These trees are weighted and allowed to sink when the ice melts. These brush piles congregate game species such as bluegill and largemouth bass.

Since January 1, 2011 brush piles have been created at East Hershey, Hershey, West Gothenburg and Fremont Slough. West Gothenburg, Cozad and Crystal are slated to receive brush piles during the 2011/2012 winter.





## I-80 Lake Research

In 2010, the Nebraska Game and Parks and the University of Nebraska Kearney began a research project to assess the potential of yellow perch fisheries along the interstate corridor. This project is in response to angler requests to increase panfish opportunities in local waterbodies. The objectives of this study are to determine predation of yellow perch by largemouth bass, and growth rates of yellow perch in interstate lakes. The field work portion of this project is now complete. Insight gained from this project will lead to improved panfish management along the interstate corridor.

If you have questions or concerns about the I-80 Lakes West of Gothenburg please contact

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## PLEASE HELP

### Prevent the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Plants & Animals



*Eurasian Watermilfoil*



*Zebra Mussel*

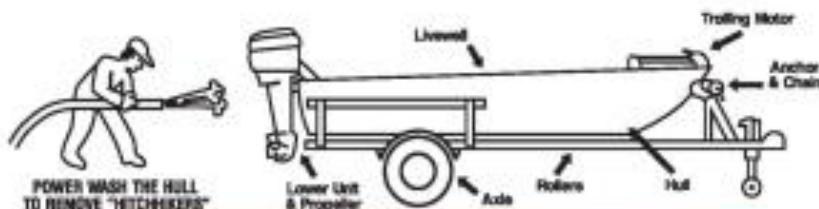


*Purple Loosestrife*

### BEFORE launching... and BEFORE leaving:

- Remove all aquatic plant fragments and animals (away from the water body)
- Disinfect & Drain the water in the transom, bilge and livewell
- Clean off all equipment (rods, reels, water skis, scuba gear, hunting gear, etc)
- Thoroughly clean boat & equipment with high pressure or hot water OR, if possible, dry equipment for 5 days before entering new waters
- Dispose of unwanted bait in trash

### WHERE TO LOOK FOR "HITCHHIKERS"



**PROTECT YOUR LAKES and RIVERS for the FUTURE**

For More Information Contact:

Nebraska Invasive Species Project  
<http://nicr.unl.edu/invasives>

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
(903) 763-2940

